

An Essay on Hydrothorax

by
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The body is composed of
 three parts, the head, the
 trunk, and the limbs.
 The head is the seat of
 the mind, and the trunk
 is the seat of the
 organs of life.
 The limbs are the
 instruments of motion.
 The head is divided
 into the brain, the
 eyes, the ears, the
 nose, and the mouth.
 The trunk is divided
 into the chest, the
 abdomen, and the
 pelvis.
 The limbs are divided
 into the arms, the
 legs, and the feet.
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Hæmorthorax: is that species of Dropsy in which an effusion of serum fluid takes place in the chest between the Pleura and the Lungs and is commonly called Dropsy of the chest.

These collections of serum fluid are found in different parts of the thorax, both sides of the Pleura being frequently involved, and not infrequently the Pericardium.

The symptoms which mark the disease, are impeded respiration, an inability of lying in a horizontal posture or on the side where the effusion does not exist, the patient is troubled with sudden startings from sleep, and also with violent fluctuations of the Heart. The pulse is irregular, anasthenic swellings of the lower extremities frequently take place, the urine is diminished in quantity, is of a high colour and deposits on cooling a red or brown sediment. The countenance is shrunk and pallid, and a sensation of heat may often be perceived by the patient upon external motions of the body.

Every muscular exertion or any thing which accelerates the circulation produces a very distressing and oppressive

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respiration. Since running quick walking especially up an eminence
loud talking and sudden palpings of the pulse are extremely pre-
judicial. The patient is also unable to lie in a horizontal pos-
ture without being in danger of immediate suffocation but is able
yet to turn his head and shoulders somewhat erect. A patient
whose chest is completely filled with fluid will not experience that
relief when his trunk is raised, as one would whose chest is only
partially filled, because the fluid in the former case cannot vary its
position in any posture of the body while in the latter the fluid, if
the patient was in a recumbent posture, would press upon the bron-
chial tubes and upper surface of the lungs, and thus impede res-
piration very much. but when the chest is raised, the fluid would
press on the Diaphragm, and thus pressure being partially re-
moved from the lungs, respiration would be very much relieved.

Pulsations of the Heart are very fre-
quently connected with this disease, and have been in some cases so
violent as not only to have been distinctly seen, but to be heard. There
is however in most cases merely an irregular action "a constant trem-
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great intermission. In no other chronic disease is the countenance more altered than in this, and is generally one of the early attendants. The Face pale of Chlorosis. The Saliva Mottled blue of the Coll. and exhibits the yellow tinge of Jaundice. convey very imperfect ideas. There is something very peculiar in the countenance, an indescribable kind of anxiety, which when seen can hardly be forgotten.

Such is often the interruption to the Inspiration and Circulation of Blood through the lungs that the patient is obliged to call in the aid of other Muscles besides those usually concerned in respiration in order to dilate the chest by elevating the ribs and for this purpose the arms are raised on the head, and a full and laboured inspiration is made with the mouth wide open. The patient also experiences great relief by bending the body forward, which causes a relaxation of the abdominal muscles. During a paroxysm of this disease, the countenance which was before pale, becomes livid, and if the respiration is very much oppressed, may even assume a black appearance, this is owing to the imperfect decomposition of the blood, which is very much interrupted in its passage through the lungs.

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The urinary secretion in this disease is diminished in quantity as it generally the case in every species of dropsy, and deposits on cooling a brown or red sediment. Healthy urine does not emit an unpleasant smell if there has not been any thing eaten which would impart an odour to it, but on the contrary the urine from a dropsical patient is generally offensive even when recently drawn and becomes exceedingly so if allowed to stand for a short time.

Swelling of the lower extremities is very often connected with this disease, which sometimes become very alarming. The swelling first commences about the ankles and gradually extends upwards till the thighs and even the scrotum are involved, and not infrequently the whole body becomes very much enlarged. This state is a great inconvenience to the patient, and some means should be adopted for its relief. The plan generally pursued is to puncture the skin with a lancet, through which the effused fluid may pass off. The lancet used for this purpose should be very sharp, as dangerous consequences have sometimes followed the use of a dull lancet, which may, by hurting the parts adja-

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The digestive apparatus seems to suffer less in this than in any other disease. The appetite in many instances is very good, but it cannot be indulged in without serious inconvenience to the patient. It is a disease chiefly confined to people of advanced age and in tracing for its origin in such class of patients, it will often be found that they have laboured for some length of time under symptoms which indicated a defective Energy. They have lost their usual appearance, their countenance becoming pale and dejected, and will often be found on Enquiry, that the disease had proceeded by something which has preyed on their minds, as misapprehensions in business, loss of friends and many other afflictions which induce a tendency to undermine their constitution, and thus predispose them to the disease.

It is a disease which is very apt to terminate very suddenly, it is not an infrequent occurrence for patients labouring under the disease to die when pursuing their usual avocations, some have expired in their chairs when surrounded by their friends. Hence it should be the duty of the phys-

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leave to apprise them of their situation.

The diseases with which Hemorrhage is most likely to be confounded are Angina Pectoris, Asthma, Organic disease of the Heart &c. but if close attention be paid to the symptoms which have been enumerated it may generally be distinguished. Quæties, however, which always appear so much relief in Hemorrhage, do not in any of these diseases although they may produce a free and copious discharge of urine but in Hemorrhage they invariably mitigate the symptoms.

The prognosis in this disease will very much depend on the age and constitution of the patient. if it attacks those of advanced age and debilitated constitution it generally proves fatal, but if the patient is young and his constitution not entirely broken down, there is some hope of a cure by prompt and appropriate treatment. This disease is frequently brought on by the frequent and immoderate use of spiritous liquors and hence it is not an infrequent occurrence in drunkards to be attacked with this disease.

Patients labouring under this disease

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should always be subject to certain cautions. They should be aware
against all sudden exertions but their movements should be
made with ease. They should be careful not to allow a stari
cask, or an elevated piece of ground to suddenly. In it pro-
duced increases dyspnea, palpitations of the heart and there
would be considerable risk of a speedy termination in death.

Dissections show previous signs of inflammation and
collections of serum in the different cavities of the thorax.

The Treatment, is to be conducted in
the same manner, and on the same principles that the other spe-
cies of Dropsy are treated.

Dropsy may either depend on an in-
flammatory, or a venous condition of the system, or the latter state
the term of *Hydropic Diathesis* has been applied.

Bleeding should be employed in the early
stage, if the state of the system admits of its service by cups appli-
ed between the shoulders and down the spine. Emetics, Purg-
atives and Diuretics are used. The great object is to give some
Medicine which will evacuate the water without increasing the

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debility of the patient. The Medicines which the ancient
physicians used, were calculated to answer this purpose, be-
ing Purgatives of the drastic kind, as *Ternomy*, *Sambago* &c.

The Medicines which are now mostly used, are the Diu-
rhetics, these are a set of Medicines which either act by stimula-
ting the kidneys to increased action, or by increasing the ac-
tion of the absorbents. Amongst this class of Medicines
which have been used, is *Digitalis*. This is one of the most
active and most celebrated of all the diuretic Medicines, and
has commanded considerable confidence in every species of dropsy.
Dr. Withering was the first that used the Medi-
cine and who has brought it to its elevated rank, recommends
it in those species of dropsy connected with a local and
obstructed condition of the system, and hence it seems to be
very well adapted to those cases brought on by intemperance
and in these cases its power (it is said) is very much improv-
ed by combining it with Opium. Its utility in *Hypertrophies*
and not however seem so evident, as it has been condemn-
ed by some and highly extolled by others, but that it has pro-

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as beneficial in this kind of dyspepsia is sufficiently established by
the attestations of several respectable writers among whom is Dr
Hamilton who speaks in extravagant terms on the use of this
medication. The Enterocele has also been employed particularly
by Pinel but it seems to be better adapted to Anasarca
and Ascites. Out of all the diuretics which have been em-
ployed there is perhaps none which has proved so beneficial
as Scoparion as Quiller its effects are known very much im-
proved by combining it with Calomel. giving about 1 gr of each
four times a day after the Mercury effects the mouth it may be
omitted, and the Quilla increased in quantity till some man-
ifest change in the disease is effected, of the efficacy of this com-
bination no one doubts as it has accomplished several cures of
a violent character.

The Nitrate of Potash has also been used
with advantage and is frequently combined with the Calomel
and Quilla and is said by some to increase the efficacy of
the combination from the nature and qualities of the article
it would seem to be suited to those cases attended with some

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degree of excitement. At the same time that the Diu-
ritic Medicines are employed it will be proper to give the
patient diluent drinks. The ancient Physicians enter-
tained the opinion that drinks were prejudicial in Dys-
entery, fearing that they would increase the quantity of the
effused fluids, but their fears were erroneous as it has
been sufficiently established that they are themselves diu-
ritic, and are valuable auxiliaries in the plan of treat-
ment, when the quantity of fluids secreted is equal to that
secreted in danger, when it may be apprehended from
them. To increase further their diuritic effect it is cus-
tomary to make an infusion from some diuritic vegeta-
bles. A very pleasant drink may be made by pouring
a pint of boiling water over an ounce of Tincture of
Rhubarb, previously bruised in a Mortar. This may be used
ad libitum, Parsley root, Water-Melon, seeds, Peas
and Horse-Mint all of which may be used in the form
of a tea. An infusion of Tincture of Horse-Radish, also
Rhubarb and Tincture of Bismuth in good old Cider has

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been found very useful. it may be given in the dose of a wine glass full. three or four times a day.

Constipation should be avoided, but the medicines which are employed generally answer this purpose but if they should not some mild laxative medicine may be given.

Certain kinds of Cancer are very troublesome as sucking in a Carriage or on horse back & any other kind of Cancer in which bodily exertion is avoided. pruritus with the flesh brush are sometimes very serviceable.

M^r Don of Birmingham in a letter to D^r Beddoes speaks of the happy effects which were derived in a case of Hydrothorax from the use of phrenetic medicines in conjunction with other remedies which of themselves had availed nothing. No quantity of oxygen mixed with mixture of atmosphere are not directed to be inhaled every day, but this can only be employed as an auxiliary. No dependence being placed in it as a cure. This mixture, by affording more oxygen in deep breaths than atmosphere

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is air, would relieve these distressing symptoms which attend
this disease.

Very much depends on the care of the di-
-et in a well regulated diet. He whose Constitution has
been broken down by intemperance, and who is constantly
oppressed by a variety of chronic affections, may derive sec-
-ondary relief from Medicines, but if he anticipates phre-
-netic Health he will be very much deceived without
strict attention be paid to his diet. The Food which con-
-tains the greatest nourishment in the smallest bulk, and
which at the same time is easy of digestion is to be prefer-
-ed. Light animal Food in a solid form is usually given, but
if there should be extreme weakness of the stomachs the soft-
-ness may be substituted in the form of Soups &c. When the
state of the system does not forbid it the opinion of beef tender
is very useful. There is nothing which forces to abstain as
to allow patients to eat articles which do not agree with
their stomachs. If however there is an febrile state the
diet should be of the lowest kind, no animal food being

shall allow.

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Pneumonic inflammation which has not been properly treated may by effusion produce all the symptoms of this disease and will require the same plan of treatment.

Blisters are found very useful and should be employed whilst the other remedies are used, the part to which they should be applied is directly over the chest and to obtain their full effect they should be kept open and prevented from healing by some stimulating ointment.

A very troublesome cough generally attends this disease which at first is dry but after a while is attended with an expectoration of Mucous, if it should become very troublesome especially at night it is to prevent sleep it will be advisable to give Opium and the Expectorant Medicines.

After having tried every remedy to carry off the matter without success and a fluctuation is evidently perceptible it has been advised to perform a pa-

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scantiness of the thorax. When it is loose in the sac of the pleura or in the pericardium, a cure may possibly be effected by this operation in conjunction with diuretics and tonics but when the fluid is contained in cysts or in the cellular texture surrounding the bronchial membrane it will be derived from it.

After the absorption of the effused fluid has been effected by medicine, a discharge by an operation its reaccumulation should be prevented by strengthening the system with tonics and appropriate exercise.

Excessive corpulency is often attended with a train of symptoms which very much resemble Hydrothorax and may be very often mistaken for this disease. These symptoms arise from the great quantity of fat which presses upon trachea and obstructs its cavity to block up its cavity. Some persons are naturally inclined to obesity which is very much increased by the indolent and inactive life they live hence it is frequently found among the sick and affluent.

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